

MINUTES
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BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MONDAY, APRIL 10, 2006
REGULAR SESSION
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM, TOWN HALL
7:00 PM

Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:00 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

Questions from Town Residents

There were no questions.

Action by Appointment

Discussion of Disposition of Harvard Lawn Fire Station

The Board discussed appointments to the proposed Harvard Fire Station Re-Use Committee. Peg Callanan has volunteered to represent the Warrant Committee. Roger Colton and Art Herron were nominated by the Housing Trust. Both are residents in precinct 7.

Chairman Solomon proposed Laurie Graham for membership. Selectman Brownsberger nominated Charles Gagnon. Selectman Firenze recommended Jim Reynolds. All are Precinct 7 residents. The Board chose Art Herron to represent the Housing Trust. The Board then suggested Andy Rojas as an architect and representative for the Planning Board if Planning Board Chair Karl Haglund and Mr. Rojas approve. There will also be one member representing the Vision 21 Committee, leaving membership on the Committee at 7 people.

The Board moved: to approve the appointment of Laurie Graham, Jim Reynolds, Charles Gagnon, Art Herron, and Peg Callanan to the Harvard Lawn Fire Station Re-Use Committee.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0). Selectmen Brownsberger will work with Ms. Graham, who was present, to help her organize the first meeting of the Committee. Mr. Younger will e-mail her the Committee's charge tomorrow.

The Board moved: to delegate the authority to Chairman Solomon to appoint a Vision 21 Committee member with Chair Jennifer Page's approval, and to similarly delegate to Selectman Firenze the authority to appoint Andy Rojas if he accepts.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

Discussion of FY 07 Budget

Mr. Younger reported that the House Ways & Means Committee has released its FY07 budget and the Chapter 70 aid for Belmont was decreased \$143,000 to FY06 levels. A number of other communities were also reduced. Other categories of local aid remained the same or have not been announced yet. Mr. Younger and Mr. Conti felt that there is a good chance that the money will be restored during debate in the House.

Selectman Firenze updated the Board on the capital budget. The Capital Budget Committee has prioritized some items, identifying \$2.096 million in top priority requests, as well as some items that would only be pursued if the money could be borrowed. Additionally, the software project will cost \$811,000, which is \$111,000 more than anticipated. There was discussion of three items for the Town Hall Complex and whether Town Meeting should be asked for more borrowing authority to take those items off budget and put them under the Building Committee.

There was also discussion of security systems. The Security Committee is trying to come up with a standard, but the Fire Station Building Committee feels it needs to move ahead with a system for the new fire buildings. Ideally, such a system should work with a more general system implemented later by the Town.

There are additional items that have been dismissed by the Capital Budget Committee and will go back into the operating budget. However, the Town may be able to pay for these using money previously appropriated for capital projects that was never spent.

Selectman Firenze said his preference would be not to borrow money for capital projects beyond the software project. This would leave only the \$2.096 million and possibly the Town Hall Complex items. If the Town Hall Complex Building Committee does not want to ask for more money, the Town will have to find the \$155,000 for those items out of the \$2.096 million by cutting other items. There was discussion of which items those might be. There was also discussion of taking some of the \$1 million for roads and using it specifically for sidewalk repair outside of the Pavement Management program, which is not currently funded in the operating budget. The Board noted it will want to consult with Public Works Director Peter Castanino and Community Development Director Glenn Clancy about this.

The Board discussed a suggestion from Selectman Brownsberger to create a Pavement Management Committee to develop a community consensus on what we want to do with our roads. The Board agreed that in light of the override vote it will be necessary to

recalibrate the Pavement Management program anyway. Selectman Brownsberger said that over the next 30 years this will be bigger than any building project and requires the same level of community input.

The Board discussed whether the override vote means that people do not want to spend money on roads or simply that they do not want to spend a lot of money on anything right now. There was a feeling that we do not have sufficient data to answer that question definitively. The Board agreed to ask Mr. Younger, Mr. Clancy, and Mr. Castanino to meet and make a recommendation on Mr. Brownsberger's proposal with the understanding that community input in some form is needed and a broader open discussion will be had after Town Meeting. However, the decision about using some of the \$1 million for sidewalks needs to happen soon so it can be explained to Town Meeting.

The Board moved: to approve a contract to reconstruct Bright Road using FY2005 money already appropriated.

The motion was carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board discussed the FY07 reduced services operating budget. It was agreed that the items coming back from the capital budget should be taken care of by the reversion money from previous capital projects.

Mr. Younger explained that budget items in Tier 2 and Tier 3 are now out because of the override vote. This means a 25% reduction in street lights, not filling one police officer (46 officers total), no watering of playing fields at Town expense, no summer labor at DPW for delta and grounds maintenance. It may be possible to get a private business to donate some funding to help in this area. Mr. Younger is looking at combining the vacant resident engineer position with a current building inspector position to free up some funds. The Assistant Director of Community Development position will still be funded, but professional services (consulting) funding will be cut. So some of the saved money from combining two positions could be used for professional services.

Mr. Younger added that \$15,000 is being cut from Planning Department professional services (outside consultants). The Town may seek grant money to pay for this or try to use found money from the aforementioned savings in Community Development.

Cemetery weekend burials will be eliminated. The Board felt this would not save any money because the Saturday burials charge more in fees and asked that this be put back in. Sunday library and summer Saturday hours at the main library, and all hours at the Benton library would be eliminated. The Treasurer's part time help and intern hours will be eliminated. The Town will reduce all new recreation programs and the Payson Park music festival contribution line item – which would not preclude the Recreation Department from funding that item under their programs budget, although it does not bring in revenue. Two police cruisers will be replaced instead of three and there will be a

cut in police and fire overtime. There will be reduced times for hazardous waste collection. There will be no employee flu shots.

There was discussion of the impact of the override vote on the school budget, which will see 6 teacher positions cut to save several hundred thousand out of about a \$1 million deficit. The Board agreed that it would like to save every teaching position possible.

Selectman Firenze mentioned the possibility of eliminating certain town positions by offering an early retirement incentive, thereby freeing up some money. He and Mr. Younger will look at whether this is feasible.

Mr. Younger noted he and Facilities Director Kevin Looney are meeting with the Archdiocese on the Senior Center lease issue. He suggested the Town could look at leasing additional communications facilities (cell towers) to raise more annual revenue. He also suggested looking at the disposition of the Benton library if it is to remain closed.

Chairman Solomon reviewed some of the accomplishments of the Town in the last few years from a management perspective: the fire station consolidation, DPW consolidation, the ESCO project which will save money and did not cost any capital money, for example. The Board has increased the opportunity for public input and participations in these decisions. The Town took the police chief out of civil service. It has also created new opportunities for business concerns to be addressed.

Selectman Firenze agreed that the Town has made progress, but noted that people are telling him they are concerned about the extent of our spending on building projects.

There was discussion of the size of the new fire stations particularly and the reasoning behind their design.

Review of Warrant Articles

Annual Town Meeting Articles

The Board noted that Housing Trust Chair Roger Colton will come before the Board next week on the McLean land disposition article and an Alcohol and Beverage Committee representative will discuss the liquor articles.

Article 5: GIS Bond De-Authorization

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 7: Non-Contributory Pensions

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 8: Contributory Pensions

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 9: Chapter 90

Mr. Younger explained that we will be approving the FY06 funds as well as the FY07 funds.

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 10: Position Classification and Compensation Plan

The Board requested an update from Human Resources Director Diane Jenkins on this.

Article 15: Veterans' retirement benefits

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 16: McLean Land disposition

Selectman Firenze mentioned that a significant number of the proposed affordable housing units will be 3 bedroom units under the current plan and this is cause for concern. The Housing Trust supports this but Selectman Firenze is uncomfortable with this. It will make the population there pretty dense with a lot of kids.

Article 17: Wellington School Statement of Interest

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 18: High School Statement of Interest

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 19: Public Health Mutual Aid agreement

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 20: Other Post-employment Benefits Trust Fund

Selectman Firenze said this will give the Retirement Board control over the investment of additional Town money for retirement health benefits as opposed to the Treasurer. The Board needs to consider how big these amounts could be and what guidance it wants to establish for how they are invested. He said he doesn't know if he is ready to grant this authority.

Article 21: Solid Waste and Recycling Contracting Authority

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 24: One-Day Liquor licenses

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Article 25: Wetlands By-law

The Conservation Committee subcommittee that has sponsored this article will ask that it be dismissed.

Article 26: Rate of interest for senior property tax deferral

This was proposed by the Board of Assessors. They will come before the Warrant Committee tomorrow night on this. There is some question about exactly what the new interest rate should be – the Treasurer is recommending a slightly higher rate to match our borrowing cost. This will most likely mean a small decrease in revenue for the Town, but may help more seniors stay in their home. Future adjustments to the article would require additional Town Meeting votes.

The Board agreed it is not concerned about additional people taking advantage of it but indeed hopes they do.

Article 33: Non-conforming Zoning

There was discussion of how to address the issue of the individual which gave rise to the petition.

Article 34: Sale of Harvard Lawn Fire Station

The Board moved: to approve this article.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Special TM Articles

Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7:

The Board noted it would like to have a public update on cemetery lot sales and how the money will be used.

The Board moved: to approve these articles.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Action by Consent

Application for Licenses and Permit – Renewals

Victualler's License

Rohbaj Enterprises, Inc. dba Kashish, 61 Leonard Street

The Board moved: to approve the license renewal application for Kashish.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Approval of BOS Minutes (03/06/06)

The Board moved: to approve all Selectmen's minutes for the March 6, 2006 meeting.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Action by Writing

Letter from Veterans' Agent re: Memorial Day Observance

The Board moved: To approve the request.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported that he has sent a request for proposals for a search firm to oversee the police chief hiring and assessment to about 10 or 12 firms. The Board will make a decision from three recommendations on this by mid-May. A new Chief would be selected and hired sometime this summer. Mr. Younger is meeting with Chief O'Malley to see if he can stay on past his May retirement date, otherwise the Board will have to appoint an Acting Chief.

The house at 166 Concord Ave: The Town is going through a legal process to have that house removed. The Board agreed it is high time to get this done.

State Board of Library Commissioners: Belmont has moved up from 13 to 12 on the funding list for library projects. The Board noted this is still far down on the Town's priority list, but noted that the more money raised privately, the more attractive the project becomes.

Other

The Board noted Fred Paulsen is resigning from the Uplands Advisory Committee to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest. The Board has received a request from a resident interested in filling the position. There was discussion. Selectman Firenze felt there needs to be a variety of perspectives on the Committee and requested this be deferred until next week.

Summer schedule: The Board discussed which dates it might meet in July and August. The Board agreed to meet August 7 and not meet for the last three weeks in August or Labor Day weekend, then meet again on September 11. The Board will plan to meet every Monday in June for now. The Board will not meet the 3rd or 10th or 24th of July. It will meet July 17 and 31.

The Board agreed that the active Building Committees and the ESCO Committee should report on their progress at Town meeting and keep it between 5 and ten minutes each. The Board agreed it would like to hear a report on the status of outstanding Building Committees like the Chenery and the Athletic Complex committees.

Bike Path: Mr. Conti is attending a meeting this Thursday with Congressman Markey's office on this. The Board will be updated on this at a future meeting.

Chairman Solomon said this summer the Board needs to have a meeting with Warrant Committee Chairman Ralph Jones and others on the budget process in general.

There was discussion of the timeline for the software project – picking a vendor and implementation. There was also discussion of the fact that if the Town chose an ASP solution it is not allowed to borrow money to fund it, which makes it an infeasible option.

The Board agreed to ask Disability Access Committee Chair Ray Glazier about a request for a reinstatement to the Committee and agreed to approve it if he approves it.

The Board discussed the need to resolve with the Historic District Commission the issue of the composition of the new Town Hall door.

The Board will meet next Tuesday, not Monday, in Conference Room 2.

The Board moved: to enter into executive session to discuss litigation and lease of real property and not to return to open session.

The motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board entered executive session at 10:41 PM and briefly recessed.

(During the executive session, one substantive motion passed unanimously. The Board adjourned at 11:12 PM.)

Thomas G. Younger
Town Administrator